

Good morning. Chairwoman Velázquez, thank you for convening this panel to spearhead the conversation about what is required to achieve success in today's environment. Congressman Buchanan, thank you very much for your focus on empowering small business operators to be more successful.

We are here to focus on the notion of what makes one "successful" in their business. To provide a context for my perspective I'll share that my instincts and interests have drawn me to explore various business experiences in different parts of the world. Both my wife and I are Duke MBAs, but much of what we have learned comes from working from the ground up, learning by trial and error. As entrepreneurs we are wired to roll up our sleeves, hone our instincts and synthesize the information that comes through us to take calculated risks.

#### Relationships come first

In each aspect of our business we are focused on the relationships we cultivate- be that with clients, vendors, partners, team members. We seek out the win/win by interacting with each individual we come in contact with respect and integrity. For me it is a priority to learn about that person in front of me, learn about what drives them, what they are good at, how I can REALLY help them.

Often people are wired for competitiveness, knocking each other down to build themselves up. We look for ways to collaborate and build synergies. In our vision, **someone does not need to lose for us to gain**; there is plenty of opportunity to go around.

Are these skills or attitudes that have to be taught? I believe that it is my role to lead the company in this way each day, to nurture a culture where the value of people is emphasized in each priority and directive set. I believe that in doing this we also attract the type of individuals that value these principles. I believe it is human nature to be kind, compassionate and helpful, especially if one's own needs are being recognized and respected. I don't think in terms of hierarchy, we are all working toward a common goal. We have a policy about who we work with...we must know, like, and trust them. In the big picture it does not matter how much money they have or how smart they might be, if they are not nice people, good people, then we don't do business.

I'd like to borrow the meaning behind the word sustainable. For me it applies to respecting the environment and also respecting people. Making decisions based on the long term relationship, irrespective of how that might impact the short term profits...that is a sustainable business practice.

In the spirit of honoring the important contributions of individuals, allow me to acknowledge the part that one young lady, Sara Del Monte, daughter of my colleague, played in bringing us here today. You and your mom embrace the spirit of collaboration and cooperation that will continue to nurture success of all of us.

#### Bridging Local to Global: making the shift to long term goals

Everyone in the world is facing challenges. I have traveled abroad 3 times so far this year and have met with many business operators to get a sense of the perspective outside our own country. What I find very interesting is that in the US much energy and attention is focused on short term. During the internet boom there was irrational exuberance. Now there is irrational pessimism.

When we were in Europe in March attending the world's largest real estate investment forum, the mood was palpably different. There we met business people from every part of the world who understand that we are in a cycle and will emerge as we always do.

My company's success in navigating the current economic climate is predicated on positioning for the longer-term, the big picture. Sure I also have to focus on short term goals to maintain cash flow, but it is critical that none of us become distracted from the long term planning and positioning.

So while we are doing very viable business in our domestic market, instinct leads me to expand internationally. Why? There are very practical explanations. Diversifying to international real estate markets- such as Costa Rica- where investors can put their money to work for higher returns is a logical answer. There is also the fact that home ownership is showing no borders. Studies suggest that approximately 6 million "baby boomers" will retire or have second homes outside the United States.

Another interesting concept is that the US is a conglomeration of immigrants, "wanderers," who come from generations of immigrants. Americans of past generations wanted to stay close to home but each generation is a completely new one. Some amongst this great melting pot are seeking out their ancestral homes or returning to villages that they once fled in places like India.

But bigger than that is the notion that positioning ourselves as Americans to be citizens of the world is an important example for our country's future. It is the vision to truly become part of a greater world.

My wife speaks to our children exclusively in Spanish; we also teach the children Chinese and have exposed them to many European languages. We want them to be world citizens. While we would love to be wired to be able to speak many languages ourselves, we want them to stand on our shoulders, to have access to more of their potential, and be equipped to do things differently than the previous generation.

I have always had the instinct to engage with many countries and cultures. And to the extent that I could, I have traveled, studied, and worked outside the United States. Now I am leveraging that same intuition as I take my business and the people working with me abroad. I hope to set an example of what it is to lead others to have the courage to do this as well.

### Embracing Sustainability

The government and people of the US are always working to improve education, quality of life, and the health of our citizens. We set an example for others around the world. I believe in this same spirit we should support ways to be more respectful of our environment, to engage in keeping our air, land, and water cleaner. There will be legislation so that we begin to build differently and operate with cleaner fuels, etc.

Lisa and I aim to be emissaries in this respect as well. Our goal is progress not perfection.

While in France I interacted with several thought leaders on this topic of sustainable development. One was a commercial building developer from Philadelphia who operates over 200 centers around the United States. Going forward they will only build green- not just because it is the healthier thing to do but because governments and insurance companies will require it in the future- he is getting a head-start.

## Conclusion

Lisa and I have an amazing mentor/guide/guru who shared an incredibly illustrative story about her grandson, part of the next generation. She and her husband bought a car. They wanted to install a phone in the car but in multiple discussions with the dealer and the cell phone provider no one could figure out how to get the phone to work. They were close to sending the phone to England to get it worked out when the grandson looked at the problem and said “that’s crazy” and touched 6 buttons and suddenly the phone and the car worked together.

I share that story because each generation does things that the previous generation could not do. The generation coming up has already internalized ways to do business better and smarter. They are not encumbered by previous ideas. All of us in this room can not even fathom what will transpire in the globalization and sustainability fronts.

Lisa and I both come from entrepreneurial parents that encouraged us to follow this path. We were able to emulate what it means to go out on your own, work hard and struggle to build something. It certainly has made us stronger. We understand the energy and spirit required to achieve success and balance in our own lives and so appreciate the opportunity to engage with you here.

Today’s hearing is entitled “Heroes of small business.” At the age of 40 I feel I am still too young to be considered a hero for deeds I have done. I hope to have the courage, however, to lead and contribute my energy towards the health and harmony amongst people country and world.